

Later that same day, Babbitt placed a call to McCain through the White House switchboard. McCain was traveling that day in Atlanta with a volunteer and a campaign consultant. While en route by car from the Atlanta airport, McCain placed a cellular phone call to Mark Salter, McCain's administrative assistant, who was at home in Northern Virginia. When McCain called, Salter was on the telephone to the White House switchboard, which had called Salter at home in an effort to locate McCain for Babbitt. Salter told McCain that Babbitt was trying to reach McCain through the White House switchboard. McCain and Salter hung up so that the White House switchboard could patch Babbitt through to McCain, which it did moments later.⁶³³

The telephone conversation between Babbitt and McCain was brief, lasting only between one and two minutes. Babbitt made what McCain described as an "abject apology" about the letter Babbitt wrote to McCain on Aug. 30, 1996.⁶³⁴ During the call, McCain recalls Babbitt saying, "John, I misled you and owe you an apology."⁶³⁵ Babbitt added that he would say as much in writing if McCain wanted him to do so. McCain accepted the apology, telling Babbitt that the two of them were friends and would remain so. McCain also told Babbitt that it would not be necessary to put anything in writing about the incident. According to McCain, Babbitt made a closing comment about the vicious nature of life in Washington. After McCain hung up with Babbitt, an aide who was with him heard McCain remark, "Babbitt's done it now."

⁶³³ As recalled by an aide who was with McCain, as soon as McCain hung up with Salter to await Babbitt's call, he said aloud, "Babbitt's in trouble," apparently anticipating what Babbitt would be calling about. OIC Interview of Carla Eudy, March 10, 1999, at 3.

⁶³⁴ OIC Interview of John McCain, Sept. 24, 1998, at 4 (hereinafter "OIC McCain Int.").

⁶³⁵ *Id.*